

Danesfort Dispatches

A Quarterly Newsletter from the U.S. Consulate General Belfast

July 2008



Vol. 3, Issue 3

Dear American Community,

Since our last newsletter the Consulate staff has been busy working on several exciting events that took place in Belfast. The highlight was the June 16th visit of President George W. Bush. During the President's visit UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen also came to Northern Ireland. The three heads of state met with First Minister Peter Robinson, Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, and other members of Northern Ireland's Executive. While the President was meeting with government leaders, the First Lady and Mrs. Brown visited the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. President and Mrs. Bush also visited Lough View Integrated School and students from Peace Players International.

On May 8th U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom Robert H. Tuttle, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland Thomas C. Foley, and Ambassador Paula Dobriansky, Special Envoy for Northern Ireland came to Northern Ireland to participate in the US-NI Investment Conference. The Conference was a great success with representatives from more than 80 North American companies and 150 participants. President Bush opened the Conference by addressing participants via video message.

This quarter's newsletter includes some interesting and useful articles. We provide a ten-step guide to ensuring your overseas vote counts in this presidential election year. Also included is information about the Department of Homeland Security's new Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) which requires visa-free travelers to register online from 2009. With the summer travel season upon us we have included information on replacing lost and stolen passports and we included a reminder about the annual September Bluegrass Music Festival at the Ulster American Folk Park. Have a safe and happy summer!

Susan Elliott, Consul General

Ten Things to Help Ensure Your Absentee Vote Counts!

1. Visit the Federal Voters Assistance Program's website at <http://www.fvap.gov> for information on the absentee registration and overseas voting process.
2. Ensure that you have applied for your absentee ballot using the hard copy or on-line version of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) Form.
3. Make sure your local election official has your current mailing address.
4. Sign and date all election materials.
5. Fulfill your state's witness/notary requirements (if required)
6. Ensure that your ballot or FPCA is postmarked.
7. Register to vote and request your ballot in a timely manner- not later than September.
8. VOTE - mail your ballot no later than October 15th of the election year.
9. Use the Federal Write In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) if you are overseas and your State absentee ballot does not arrive in time to be mailed back by the state's deadline.
10. Any questions or concerns contact the U.S. Consulate General Belfast by telephone at 02890 386104 or by email at consularbelfast@state.gov. For more information, forms, and election information go to <http://www.fvap.gov>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Travel Alert	2
2008 Olympics - Department of State Resource	2
Spotlight - Lost & Stolen Passports	3
ACS FAQ - UK Visas	4
Social Security Numbers	5
New Country Specific Information for the United Kingdom	6
Culture Corner	6

Travel Alert - Hurricane Season 2008



Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE: 02890386100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 02890 681301

Email:

Consularbelfast@state.gov

Website:

<http://london.usembassy.gov>



The U.S. Department of States Bureau of Consular Affairs recently issued the latest Travel Alert for Hurricane Season 2008. The Travel Alert is being issued to alert U.S. citizens to the Hurricane Season in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico. The official Atlantic Hurricane Season runs from June through November. This Travel Alert expires November 30, 2008.

National Weather Service officials at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predict a 65 percent chance that activity during the 2008 Atlantic Hurricane Season will be above normal this year, forecasting 12 to 16 named storms, with 6 to 9 becoming hurricanes. NOAA recommends that those in hurricane-prone regions begin preparations at this time for the upcoming season.

For the full text of the Travel Alert visit http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_3245.html

For more information on Hurricane Season 2008 go to

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/hurricane_season/hurricane_season_3795.html



The 2008 Olympics - Department of State Resources

The XXIXth Olympic Summer Games and the Beijing Paralympic Summer Games will take place from August 8-24, 2008, and September 6-17, 2008, respectively. There are seven major venue sites, six outside of Beijing, including Hong Kong, Qingdao, Qinhuangdao, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Tianjin. Equestrian events will be held in Hong Kong and sailing events in Qingdao. Qinhuangdao, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Tianjin will host the soccer preliminaries.

For more information and the Department of State's Olympic Fact Sheet, go to

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1762.html .

For another look at the Olympics go to the Department of State International Information Program website at <http://www.america.gov>. There you can find their April issue eJournal USA "The Olympic Experience." The publication looks at the pursuit of individual excellence by athletes themselves with essays by Olympic veterans who share their memories about the work, the disappointments, and the moments of glory. Go to <http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0408.html> .

New State Department Resource for American Students Abroad

The number of college students and young people studying and traveling abroad is growing rapidly. Over 200,000 U.S. college students now study abroad annually, and hundreds of thousands more travel internationally for spring break and other vacations. The Bureau of Consular Affairs has launched a new information resource for American citizen college students and young people studying and traveling internationally, designed to promote safe, smart travel. The Students Abroad information campaign includes a new website, flyers called "go! guides" and a "Tips to Go" wallet card. Through its website at <http://studentsabroad.state.gov> we offer college students a one-stop reference for international travel. Take a look!



Spotlight : Lost & Stolen Passports

To replace a lost/stolen passport, it will be necessary for you to appear personally at the Consulate. To schedule an appointment, please telephone (028) 90386104, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m, except American and British holidays or email consularbelfast@state.gov. You are advised to report the loss/theft of your passport to the local police in the area in which the loss/theft occurred and to bring a copy of the police report with you to the Consulate General.

At the time of your visit, you will be required to present the following documentation:

Completed Passport Application Forms

Complete the forms DS-11 and DS-64 in black ink. Do not sign the form DS-11.

Evidence of your United States citizenship

U.S. birth certificate, Naturalization certificate, Certificate of Citizenship, Consular Report of Birth Abroad or an expired passport; and

Current Photographic Identification:

U.S. driver's license, foreign passport or national identity card; current UK drivers license;

If you are unable to present the photo identification specified above, you should bring a family member who can present a valid U.S. passport, and who is able to submit a sworn statement confirming your identity.

Passport Photographs: Two passport photographs that conform to the specifications - http://London.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/photo.html. We will reject any photographs that do not conform to these standards.

Passport Fees: \$100 if age 16 or older, \$85 if under 16. The fee may be paid in cash, dollars or sterling, or by credit card (Visa/MC/AmEx/Discover/Diners Club or with a debit card which bears the Visa or MC logo). We cannot accept personal checks.

Return Envelope: Passport processing takes approximately two weeks. Your passport will be returned to you by mail. You must bring a prepaid, self-addressed, Royal Mail 'Special Delivery' envelope with you on the day of your visit to ensure the safe return of your documents. 'Special Delivery' envelopes can be purchased with "minimum postage paid" from any UK post office.

If you are aged 16 or 17: You should be accompanied by one of your parents. S/he should bring his/her passport. If your surnames are not the same, s/he should also bring any documentation necessary to establish the parent/child relationship, e.g., birth certificate, marriage certificate, divorce decrees, etc.

If you are aged under 16: You must be accompanied by both parents. Both parents should bring their current passports and your birth certificate. The only exceptions to this requirement are:

- If only one parent can be present, the other parent must submit a notarized statement of consent, Form DS-3053 (<http://London.usembassy.gov/nireland/nipass/inpers.html>) authorizing passport issuance for the child.
- A parent with sole custody of a child under the age of 16 must be present with the child to make the application, and must submit documentary evidence of sole custody.

You are required to apply for the replacement passport in person at this office. An appointment is necessary. To schedule an appointment, please telephone (028)90 386104, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except American and British holidays or email consularbelfast@state.gov.

American Citizen Services - FAQ's



Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE: 02890386100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 02890 681301

Email:

Consularbelfast@state.gov

Website:

<http://london.usembassy.gov>



Q: My relative in the U.S. wants to come to the Northern Ireland to travel and maybe work. Where should he start to locate information on what paperwork is required to enter the United Kingdom?

A: At this time, a visa is not required for tourist or business visits to the UK of less than six months in duration. Those planning to visit the UK for any purpose other than tourism or business, or who intend to stay longer than six months, should consult the website of the British Embassy in the United States at <http://britainusa.com> for information about current visa requirements. Note: Requirements are subject to change. Check for the most up-to-date information before your travel.

Those who are required to obtain a visa and fail to do so may be denied entry and returned to their port of origin. The U.S. Embassy cannot intervene in UK visa or immigration matters.

Those seeking current UK visa information may also contact UK consular offices via their premium rate telephone service at 1-900-656-5000 (cost \$3/minute) or 1-212-796-5773 (\$12 flat fee) in the United States. The service operates Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., U.S. Eastern Time, excluding public holidays. There is also a no-fee web site for visa information at <http://www.visainfoservices.com>. For general information, you can consult the UK Home Office Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) website at <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>. Entry requirements for specific visa categories (e.g. student, fiancé/e, settlement, employment) may also be found at that site.

Department of Homeland Security Announces Implementation of Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)

On June 4, 2008 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the Interim Final Rule for the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), a new online system that is part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and is required by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007.

Currently, citizens of VWP countries complete a written I-94W form providing basic biographical, travel, and eligibility information while en-route to the U.S. With ESTA, VWP travelers will provide this information online prior to departure for the U.S.

Once ESTA is mandatory, all nationals or citizens of VWP countries who plan to travel to the United States for temporary business or pleasure under the VWP will need to receive an electronic travel authorization prior to boarding a U.S.-bound airplane or cruise ship. The requirement will go into effect next year and does not affect U.S. citizens traveling overseas.

ESTA will determine, almost immediately in many cases, if an individual is eligible for VWP travel, and if such travel poses any law enforcement or security risks. ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel, and once approved, will be valid for up to two years or until the applicant's passport expires, whichever comes first. Authorizations will also be valid for multiple entries into the U.S. To facilitate the authorization process, DHS recommends that ESTA applications be submitted as soon as an applicant begins planning U.S.-bound travel, and not less than 72 hours prior to travel.

On Aug. 1, 2008, the department will begin to accept voluntary applications through the ESTA Web site at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/. Until ESTA is mandatory for all VWP travelers, however, ESTA applicants will also still need to complete an I-94W form en-route, for presentation at a U.S. port of entry. The Secretary of Homeland Security is anticipated to publish a notice in the Federal Register by mid-November 2008, announcing implementation of mandatory ESTA requirements on Jan. 12, 2009.

Last fiscal year, the U.S. welcomed more than 15 million VWP visitors. For more information about ESTA, please visit www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel.

U.S. Customs & Border Protection Announces Pilot Program



Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE: 02890386100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 02890 681301

Email:

ConsularBelfast@state.gov

Website:

<http://london.usembassy.gov>



U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has announced the launch of the Global Entry™ pilot program. Global Entry™ is designed to expedite the screening and processing of low-risk, frequent international “trusted” travelers entering the United States. Global Entry™ will be available for U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents who are frequent international travelers, provided they have not been found guilty of a criminal offense, charged with a customs or immigration offense, or declared inadmissible to the U.S. under immigration legislation.

Biometric fingerprint technology will be used to verify the passenger's identity and confirm his or her status as a Global Entry™ participant. Upon returning from international travel, Global Entry™-enrolled travelers may bypass the regular passport control line and proceed directly to the Global Entry™ kiosk. Applications for enrollment in the Global Entry™ program will be available through the Global On-Line Enrollment System (GOES) available at www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/. The Global Entry™ application process consists of three steps. First, an applicant must complete and submit an on-line application through GOES and pay a \$100 fee through www.Pay.gov. CBP officers will review the applicant's information and a background investigation will be conducted. Finally, the applicant will undergo an interview with CBP officers at an Enrollment Center at JFK, Houston or Dulles Airport. For more information please visit CBP's Frequently Asked Questions at www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/trusted_traveler/global_entry/global_entry.xml



Social Security Numbers: No Longer Living in the United States?

Occasionally, when a US citizen or Legally Admitted Permanent Resident returns to their home country, they renounce their U.S. citizenship or permanent residence status. Often, they contact us to ask what they should do with their Social Security card.

Our advice is to keep the card in a safe place. The Social Security Number assigned to them is unique. No one else will ever be assigned that number again.

Furthermore, their earnings, while in the United States, are filed under their Social Security Number. When it is time to file for benefits or Medicare, they will need to provide their number.

Lastly, the change in citizenship or alien status doesn't affect earnings record. The earnings posted on their record remain on their record forever. So when it comes to filing for benefits, the credits earned as a result of those earnings will be used to determine their eligibility to benefits and payment amount.

For more information go to the Social Security Administration website at <http://www.ssa.gov>.

Internal Revenue - Phishing, Email Scams and Bogus Sites

The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) is warning people of recently reported spam e-mail purportedly from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) which is actually an attempt to steal personal information. The e-mail advises the recipient that direct deposit is the fastest and easiest way to receive their economic stimulus tax rebate. The message contains a hyperlink to a fraudulent form which requests the recipient's personally identifiable information, including bank account information. To convince consumers to reply, the e-mail warns that a failure to complete the form in a timely manner will delay the issuance of the rebate check.

Please be cautious of unsolicited e-mails. It is recommended not to open e-mails from unknown senders because they often contain viruses or other malicious software. It is also recommended to avoid clicking links in e-mails received from unknown senders as this is a popular method of directing victims to phishing websites.

If you have received an e-mail similar to this, please notify the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) by filing a complaint at <http://www.ic3.gov>.

New Country Specific Information for the United Kingdom



Danesfort Dispatches

Department of
State

U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL BELFAST

DANESFORT
HOUSE

223 STRANMILLIS
ROAD

BELFAST BT9 5GR

PHONE: 02890386100
American Citizen
Services - ext. 4104

FAX: 02890 681301

Email:

Consularbelfast@state.gov

Website:

<http://london.usembassy.gov>



New Country Specific Information for the United Kingdom was released on June 3, 2008, and is available online at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1052.html. In this update, among other things, we've supplemented the "crime" section with information about the "cabwise" program, leaving a GPS device visible in a parked car, and using underpasses after dark. In the CSI we also note that "generally low crime rates and rates decreased slightly in 2007 in significant categories;" however, we have seen an increase in arrests for carrying knives following the announcement of stronger sanctions to prevent knife crime <http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Knife-Crime-Sanctions>. A United Kingdom Customs Guide, detailing what items visitors are prohibited from bringing into the UK, is available at http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/downloadFile?contentID=HMCE_CL_001734

We've also had reports in the past month from Americans residing in the UK who have found unauthorized charges were made in the U.S. on their U.S. credit cards. The Federal Trade Commission has advice on its website at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec01.shtm> that can help people avoid becoming victims of credit or bank fraud, particularly when using electronic systems. One basic safeguard is to review your bank and credit card statements regularly for unauthorized charges.

Culture Corner

The U.S. Consulate General occasionally provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

Ulster American Folk Park - 17th Annual Appalachian and Bluegrass Festival - September 5-7th, 2008 - Join thousands of visitors for Europe's premier bluegrass music event in the stunning setting of the open-air Ulster American Folk Park. International and award winning artists already booked for the 2008 festival include Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper, Dan Paisley & The Southern Grass from the USA and the G2 Bluegrass Band from Sweden. For more information visit their website at http://www.folkpark.com/whats_on/events/?article=1444



American Citizen Services:

In the event of a genuine emergency involving a U.S. Citizen in Northern Ireland, our after hours phone number is 0870 238 5428.

Consular Closure Dates

The U.S. Consulate General will be closed on the following dates:

Friday, July 4, 2008 - Independence Day

Monday, July 14, 2008 - Orangeman's Day

Tuesday, July 15, 2008 - Orangeman's Day

Monday, August 25, 2008 - Summer Bank Holiday

Monday, September 1, 2008 - Labor Day

Kids Corner



4TH of July Word Search

U	R	L	W	Z	T	O	G	B	T
N	G	U	A	K	I	N	G	S	P
I	M	K	R	S	E	T	A		S
T	A	X	E	S	W	Y	L	U	J
E	M	O	D	E	E	R	F	M	B
D	F	Y	T	R	E	B	I	L	L
W	W	E	N	G	L	A	N	D	U
R	L	L	Z	N	W	H	I	T	E
A	S	K	R	O	W	E	R		F
P	J	R	U	C	Q	L	N	L	B

WORDS:

BLUE, CONGRESS, ENGLAND, FIREWORKS

*FLAG, FREEDOM, JULY, KING, LIBERTY, PARADE, RED,
STATES, TAXES, UNITED, WAR, WHITE*